

Is CIA 'Invisible' Government?

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Retired Official Says 'Not So' •

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(Staff Writer)

DELRAY BEACH — In this, as in any election year, catch phrases become interwoven into speeches, articles and daily conversation. One of those in current use is "invisible government," in reference to the Central Intelligence Agency.

What is the CIA, actually? Is it really an "invisible government?" Is it guilty of all the failures attributed to it? What manner of beast is this?

For some of the answers, The News turned to W. Osborn Webb, former deputy assistant director of CIA, Office of Current Intelligence. He retired to Delray Beach a year and a half ago after serving 17 years with the agency, since its inception in February, 1946.

Webb first pointed out that most Americans instinctively distrust any activity they don't know everything about. In addition, there is a general feeling that "spying" has no place in a free society such as ours.

He emphasizes that there is nothing more sinister about the CIA than about the highly-respected FBI. One deals in foreign matters, the other with domestic.

Both are needed to cope with our enemies, who have the nasty habit of not adhering to the Marquess of Queensbury rules. Both agencies operate in the same manner—that is, secretly—and neither can publish its every move on the front pages of the daily newspapers. Cooperation between the two is close and constant.

Webb said, the CIA was es-

tablished by act of Congress in 1946 for a number of good reasons. World War II had demonstrated that the U.S. as a world power could not operate effectively without a secret intelligence service. Distasteful as such a service might seem, it was decided that one central agency would be more efficient than several different groups getting into each other's hair and working at cross purposes.

He pointed out that clandestine activity is not the only reason for having a centralized intelligence service. We live in a world where events in almost every nation affect U.S. security interests.

Those responsible for charting U.S. fortunes — from the President down—must have at their fingertips an impartial

evaluation of people and events around the globe. This country cannot afford the luxury—or the danger—of getting conflicting or biased interpretations of events from the intelligence organs of three armed services (agencies) and the State Department.

CIA was designed to provide the needed unbiased coordination of intelligence gathering and reporting. In keeping with the country's tradition, it was placed under civilian rather than military control.

Webb then went on to demolish the charge that CIA is an "invisible government," pursuing its own policies. He said there is no major activity of the CIA that is not known to appropriate officials, including the President. Furthermore,

nothing is done in any country that is not known in detail to the U.S. ambassador in that country.

In addition, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency makes regular reports to members of the armed services and foreign relations committees of both the Senate and the House of Representatives — disposing of the theory that even Congress has no idea what is being done, nor what has happened to the money it has appropriated for the agency.

Webb concedes that the operation of the agency is expensive. However, he said few laymen can possibly conceive of the magnitude of the task. There are so many nations in the world today, and so much ferment — all of it a potential threat to U.S. interests — that it takes an enormous staff to keep a figurative finger on the world pulse.

The remarks of a half drunken rabble rouser in a bar in some remote country must be reported along with intelligence of greater import from capitals of large nations. Webb recalls that as many as 5,000 separate reports — secret and plain text — have been processed in Washington in a single day.

Each of these reports is processed, analyzed, copied and, when deemed important enough, delivered to

the appropriate policy-making officials with all possible speed. At times it is done very rapidly indeed — a particular message from a Middle Eastern capital reached the president's desk within minutes.

FIRE DEPT.

Webb said, in some respects, the CIA resembles a fire department. It must keep a stable of experts following developments in every country, even when nothing is going on, just to be ready with the right answers when trouble does flare up to threaten U.S. interests or U.S. lives.

He added that scientists are not easing the financial burden on intelligence. The missile and space age has spawned scientific information gathering techniques that he can only describe as "fantastic."

He said a high degree of secrecy and anonymity is essential if the agency is to accomplish its purpose, and explained that there are even gradations of secrecy within the organization. The amount of information given to any member of the group is predicated on his need to know. Oftentimes, employees of the agency are not known to each other.

Webb believes the most damaging effect of the unfortunate public image of CIA is on the agency's ability to attract bright young men and women to make a career of intelligence work. The work requires long hours and little public recognition and admi-



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